



**OFFICE OF THE ATTORNEY GENERAL
STATE OF ILLINOIS**

Lisa Madigan
ATTORNEY GENERAL

October 2009

RE: Illinois Automated Victim Notification System

Dear Honorable Members of the Illinois Legislature:

As Chairman of the Crime Victim and Witness Notification Advisory Committee, I am pleased to provide you with an update on the operation of the Illinois Automated Victim Notification System (Illinois AVN system). The Crime Victim and Witness Notification Advisory Committee (AVN Committee) was created in 1999 to assist the Attorney General in the implementation of the Illinois AVN system. (725 ILCS 120/8.5(g); see Attachment for a list of the 2009 AVN Committee Members). The AVN Committee is charged with evaluating the operation of the system and reporting its activities and status to the General Assembly each year.

The Existing System

The Illinois AVN system is a toll-free, bilingual (English/Spanish) telephone service that provides information about changes in an offender's custody and case status to victims, witnesses, family members, and members of the public. This statewide service, which is available 24 hours a day, seven days a week, protects and empowers crime victims. The Illinois AVN system also serves as a valuable resource to assist law enforcement, prosecutors, and court personnel as they carry out their constitutional and statutory duties to notify crime victims of changes in an offender's custody status and upcoming court dates. (See Article I, section 8.1(a) of the Illinois Constitution, delineating the rights of crime victims and, and the implementation legislation contained in the Rights of Crime Victims and Witnesses Act, 725 ILCS 120/4 and 4.5).

The Illinois AVN system provides this valuable notification via a computer interface with county jail booking systems, the Illinois Department of Corrections, the Illinois Department of Human Services, and circuit court clerks throughout the state. The Illinois AVN system transfers information from these sources to a centralized communications center, which in turn, generates updates to anyone who is a registered user of the system. Currently, 101 Sheriffs representing 93 jails statewide, 97 Circuit Court Clerks, and the Illinois Department of Corrections participate in the Illinois AVN system.

VINELINK is an on-line resource that affords victims, witnesses, and interested parties the opportunity to register for notifications via the internet. VINELINK also allows users to conduct offender custody searches and court case status searches from available data. This web-based service, like the phone service, is completely secure and free-of-charge.

To register for the Illinois AVN system, victims and/or other interested parties can simply call a toll-free number: 1-866-5-NOTIFY (1-866-566-8439), (TTY-1-877-502-2423) or register online at www.vinelink.com. Registered users have several options to choose from: to receive notification of the offender's custody status, the offender's court case status, or any changes in the offender's custody, and/or changes in the status of the offender's court case.

Users may register for phone notification, email notification, or both. Users that register for phone notification must select a four-digit Personal Identification Number (PIN) that allows the Illinois AVN system to monitor when the intended recipient has received notification of the requested event. If the correct PIN is not entered, the system will continue to attempt to make notification calls as often as every 30 minutes for 24 hours, allowing the user to correct their PIN entry. At any point in the process, users may connect to a live operator for assistance. All e-mail notifications are sent through the VINELINK system to an email of the user's choice.

At the current time, the Illinois AVN system has access to custody information for approximately 129,693 offenders and case status information for over 1,304,218 open court cases. To date, the Illinois AVN system has provided information to 232,448 registered users. Currently, the system is providing information to 180,430 active registered users for automatic notification of inmate release or change in court status. The system manages approximately 70,000 calls per month, which includes calls into the system as well as outgoing notification calls made to registered users. The system averages between 50,000 and 56,000 searches per month for offender custody status and court case status information.

To ensure the public is aware of this valuable service, staff from Attorney General Lisa Madigan's office provide training on the features and benefits of the Illinois AVN system. In addition, the Attorney General's staff distributes brochures, fact sheets, and other materials about the system throughout the state to interested parties.

Enhancement of the Existing System

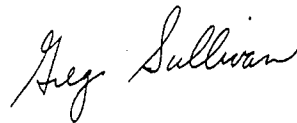
In 2008, the General Assembly amended the Sex Offender Community Notification Act (730 ILCS 152/1 et. seq.) to require law enforcement to provide victims of sex offenses certain information relating to sex offenders. This year, in response to the recommendations from members of the AVN Committee and the Illinois Sheriffs Association, the Attorney General's Office applied for and received funding from the Department of Justice, Office of Justice Programs SAVIN Grant Program (Statewide Automated Victim Information and Notification) to enhance the existing Illinois AVN

system. The AVN Committee believes that this enhancement will assist law enforcement as they carry out their duties under the Sex Offender Community Notification Act. A dedicated website will be created to provide real-time information and updates on all registered sex offenders. The data required by the Sex Offender Registration Act (730 ILCS 150/1 et. seq.) will be entered directly from the registration sites. This data includes the offender's name, address, place of employment and school enrollment. Victims and other registered users will receive notifications relating to changes in the offender's residence and employment, as well as whether the offender fails to re-register. The enhanced Illinois AVN system will also include pro-active mapping capabilities that will enable persons to be notified if a sex offender moves into their neighborhood.

If you have any questions about the existing Illinois AVN system or the new enhancement, or would like additional information about how this system effectively serves the victims and witnesses of violent crime in your district, please do not hesitate to contact Mike Bastien at 618/529-6405 or Cynthia Hora at 312/814-1427 of the Attorney General's Office. Requests for free brochures or other resource materials for distribution in your local and Springfield offices may be made through Mr. Bastien.

On behalf of the entire AVN Committee, we express our gratitude to Attorney General Madigan for providing this invaluable service to the citizens of Illinois.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Greg Sullivan".

Greg Sullivan, Chairman
Crime Victim and
Witness Notification Advisory Committee

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